

SUGGESTIONS ON LEARNING MORE ABOUT NURSING HOME CONDITIONS

After reading my report on nursing home conditions in the 2nd Congressional District of Colorado, you may be interested in learning more about the conditions in a specific home. Whether you're a current or prospective nursing home resident, or a family member or friend of a nursing home resident, it's important to learn as much as possible about a nursing home. There are several simple ways to do this.

First, visit the website of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA)

(<http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Home.asp>)-- This federal agency, which administers both the Medicare and Medicaid programs, provides information on all 17,000 nursing homes in the United States. Using this website, you can search for any nursing home in the country -- by city or zip code. For each home, you can find information on:

- C All violations cited in the nursing home's most recent state inspection
- C A comparison between the number of violations at the home and the average number of violations at other homes in the same state
- C The number of beds and residents in the home
- C Whether the home accepts Medicare and/or Medicaid
- C Whether the home is run by a for-profit corporation, non-profit corporation, religious organization, or government entity
- C Characteristics about the residents in the home (*e.g.*, the number of incontinent residents, the number of residents in restraints)

If you don't have access to the Internet or aren't comfortable using the Internet, you can obtain this same information by calling HCFA at 1-800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227).

If you need information about selecting or paying for a nursing home, HCFA's website also has a useful pamphlet titled "Your Guide to Choosing a Nursing Home."

Second, visit the nursing homes in which you are interested -- There's no substitute for actually visiting a facility, talking to residents and staff members, examining the cleanliness of the facility, and observing the interaction between residents and staff.

Third, read the state inspection reports -- Every nursing home in the United States is inspected on average once a year. The findings of the state inspectors are contained in a detailed report, which lists all violations of government standards. You can obtain copies of these reports from two places:

- C You can contact the nursing home in which you are interested. By law, all nursing

homes are required to post the inspection reports in a prominent place.

- C You can call, e-mail or write the **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (303-692-2800)**. E-mail requests should be sent to: health.facilities@state.co.us. Letter requests should be mailed to:

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Health Facilities Division
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South
Denver, CO 80246

Other Sources of Information

If you still need more information about a specific home or about paying for nursing home care, there are several other good sources of information.

- C **Call or visit the website of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (303-692-2800) (<http://www.hfd.cdphe.state.co.us/static/ncf.htm>)** -- This state agency is in charge of the licensing and certification of all nursing homes in Colorado, including the annual inspections that are conducted of each home. On its website, you can find:
- C Information on how to choose a nursing home
 - A list of all the nursing homes in the state.
 - A brief summary of the home's compliance status.
 - **Call the Colorado ombudsman (800-288-1376, 303-722-0300)** -- In Colorado, as in all other states, there is an ombudsman who can answer questions about nursing homes or assist in resolving disputes between nursing homes and residents or family members.
- C **Call or visit the website of the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (202-332-2275) (<http://www.nccnhr.org>)** -- This national organization offers many publications and factsheets on the rights of nursing home residents and how family members can ensure that residents receive quality care.